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GLOBAL PROGRAM OPTIMIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation investigates the optimization of object code produced by compilers of higher level languages. Its primary goal is the isolation of a set of primitives which lead to a concise description and correspondingly concise implementation of program optimizations. In addition to being powerful enough to provide a concise representation, the primitives are also basic enough to apply to a wide range of languages and optimization techniques.

The concept of similarity functions is introduced. A set of new optimizations described in terms of the similarity notion is proposed. A translator is described which implements code motion, redundant expression elimination, and new similarity-induced optimizations using the primitives developed in the dissertation. Examples are presented demonstrating the effect of these optimizations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the first FORTRAN compilers, the loss in object code efficiency incurred by the use of higher-level languages has concerned both programmers and compiler designers alike. The proponent of a language intended for compilation, even though he may argue that the cost in lost efficiency is far outweighed by the power and elegance of his language, must generally supply a compiler which produces reasonably efficient code in order to attract a community of users. The new breed of "languages for implementation of systems" is measured against this criterion of efficiency in the extreme.

This thesis investigates the area of object code optimization in the presence of control flow. Its major goal is the isolation of a set of primitives which lead to a concise definition and a correspondingly concise implementation of program optimizations. In addition to being powerful enough to provide a concise representation, these primitives must also be basic enough to apply to a wide range of languages and optimization techniques.

The search for a set of primitives to describe a collection of varied optimizations is motivated initially by a desire to achieve a uniform

representation of these optimization strategies. A uniform representation, in turn, leads to an implementation which can be easily structured into combinations of the set of primitives. As a result the same clarity and concision which is inherent in the primitives is reflected in the implementation. In order to demonstrate this correlation between the description and implementation of various optimizations, a later chapter will discuss the structure of an actual optimization pass within a real compiler which uses the primitives.

The identification of a collection of primitives produces another benefit. The ability to perform formal manipulations on these primitives aids in exposing new optimization strategies and helps identify the common characteristics of apparently unrelated techniques. This effect is, of course, more difficult to document. It has been our experience that even though the discovery of an optimization strategy may not develop solely from manipulating the primitives, the ability to grasp the essential characteristics of an optimization is significantly enhanced by the availability of a set of objects which can be used to describe that strategy concisely.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPTIMIZATION

Our investigation has evolved through a set of selections among various alternatives and been motivated by several goals, some already

described above and others yet to be stated. Any such evolution of ideas builds upon the work of our predecessors who have investigated the problem of object code optimization. We will not attempt to produce a complete catalog but instead will select those efforts which have guided our choices among alternatives either by contrast or in parallel.

In June, 1965 an article by J. Nievergelt[N65] provided a principle for this area of investigation that seems to remain valid today. He states a limiting constraint on the extent of optimization strategies corresponding to our own: a programmer can optimize his program by relying to a great extent on his knowledge of what that program is to do. Indeed his initial encoding of the solution was already a significant optimization of some less well-defined general problem solving technique. The optimizations we consider are restricted to those which depend on the form of the program only. The results of this thesis show that there continues to be a significant gain in object code efficiency resulting from this level of optimization. As the sophistication of programming languages progresses, it becomes the responsibility of the optimizing compiler to remove the burden of the more tedious details of low-level optimizations from the user. Indeed, as the class of operators and the complexity of data structures grow in power and breadth, the programmer becomes further removed from the target machine (as does the language, perhaps). At some point, then, he is no longer capable of dealing with (or better; he should no longer be as concerned with) the complexities of optimizing his

constructs.

In August, 1965 C.W. Gear[G65] summarized and collected information on the state-of-the-art of machine independent optimizations and proposed a three pass compilation incorporating those strategies. That collection of optimizations remains the basis for most of today's investigations.

A significant amount of research into the area of optimization has centered around the work of F. Allen[A69,A70], J. Cocke[C70], and J. Schwartz[CS70]. Their influence is very evident in the optimizations of the FORTRAN-H compiler which are described by E. Lowry and C. Medlock[LM69]. The authors state that at the cost of a 40 percent increase in compilation time they produce code which is 25 percent smaller and which executes in one-third the time of that produced by the FORTRAN-G compiler. These measurements indicate the real effectiveness of the collection of optimizations implemented in FORTRAN-H.

Much of the work done by Allen and Cocke concerns itself with the processing of the control flow structure of programs and hence contains a considerable amount of graph-theoretic investigation related to control flow representation. We have chosen instead to restrict the control flow semantics to a go-to-less form of control as exhibited in Bliss[B71,WRH71] and concentrate on primitives which relate to the data flow semantics of a program. These data flow primitives concentrate heavily on exposing the issue of re-ordering evaluations in a language independent manner. Since

the suggestion to eliminate the goto by Dijkstra[D68], a debate has proceeded on the merits of the proposal[H72,W71,W72]. Our own experience in reading, writing, and compiling go-to-less programs (in the Bliss sense) supports the adoption of this programming style. Moreover, the assumption of this form of control flow has had a significant impact on our investigation of optimization since it enables us to enumerate a small set of control environments and restrict our attention to optimizations related to those control structures. Previous investigations into optimization techniques described in the more general control flow environment, in general, assume that the program can be converted to a representation which is essentially modeled by the control flow semantics of Bliss.

The preliminary notes written by Cocke and Schwartz[CS70] appear to be the single most comprehensive catalog of optimization techniques available. Throughout the thesis we will refer to the collection of optimizations described in that text as the set of "classical" optimization strategies. The text by Cocke and Schwartz provides us with another motivation for proposing a set of primitives. Most of the descriptions of optimization techniques and their implementations are presented in terms of algorithms which often cover several pages and which are closely related to intermediate representations of the program. A major point in introducing our primitives is to demonstrate an alternative method for describing and implementing optimizations which is considerably more concise, understandable, and independent of the intermediate representation.

Finally, anyone investigating the area of optimization must be aware of the interaction of this area with the study of the equivalence of programs and the detection of potential parallelism in a computation. The issue of equivalence of programs arises from recognizing that an optimization strategy is concerned with transforming a program P to a program P' which is input-output equivalent to P . The area of program equivalence is broad in scope but there has been some work done by A. Aho and J. Ullman[ASU70,AU70] from the viewpoint of an application to optimization. In general, however, their work has been restricted to straight-line programs.

Many optimization techniques involve the re-ordering of the evaluation of expressions in a program. Equivalently those expressions, whose order of evaluation can be interchanged, can in fact be executed in parallel with sufficient interlocks. Some very interesting work in representing the inherent parallelism in a program has been done by R. Shapiro and H. Saint[SS69] using Petri Nets. While the Petri Net model provides an elegant framework for their investigations, this thesis proposes primitives which are more easily implementable in the environment of a compiler.

In addition to the influence of the above work, another principle has directed our selection among several areas of program optimization. We intend to investigate only machine independent optimizations. Thus, for example, we will not discuss "peephole" optimization. Typically optimizations of this class exploit the instruction set of a particular

computer by combining a sequence of several operations into a single machine instruction. Also the thesis will not investigate the area of register allocation. Although this area still requires extensive investigation, the time space constraints on a dissertation have led us to concentrate on those machine independent optimizations which most directly evolve into the new optimizations presented later in the thesis.

THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis contains five chapters and two appendices. The remainder of the introduction summarizes our initial assumptions and gives a brief introduction to Bliss. Chapter II introduces the primitives and describes various optimizations techniques in terms of those primitives. Chapter III discusses a concept called similarity which is then used to describe an additional collection of new optimization techniques. Chapter IV presents a set of examples illustrating the various optimization strategies proposed in Chapters II and III. Chapter V contains a summary of our results and suggestions for future research.

INITIAL ASSUMPTIONS

It is inappropriate that a thesis in the area of optimization should tie itself to a single language or single target machine. On the other

representation of the control flow semantics without further analysis.

In addition to treating the control flow semantics in a general fashion, we wish to factor out of the development the issue of side-effects which result from the semantics of the language's data flow. To this end, a primitive relation, essential predecessor, whose function is to remove the language dependent issue of side-effects, will be introduced. Given a particular language, the semantics of the applications of side-effects within that language define this relation.

The initial assumptions of the thesis are summarized:

- (1) algorithms employing the optimization primitives assume a tree representation of the source program as input and produce a similar representation as output;
- (2) target machine independence is achieved by parameterizing the optimization algorithms and requiring them to produce information for subsequent machine dependent optimizations in the output representation;
- (3) the control flow semantics of the source language are assumed to be go-to-less; and
- (4) language dependent data flow semantics are to be isolated by primitive ordering relations so that subsequent development becomes language independent.

A SHORT BLISS PRIMER

Throughout the thesis we will present examples to clarify and motivate concepts as they are introduced. Bliss (and occasionally Algol[AL60]) will be the languages used in these examples. We emphasize that Bliss is introduced for use as a syntactic representation of the control structures and its use does not reduce the language-independence of the optimizations. Bliss is sufficiently Algol-like in many aspects so that a brief introduction to the language should be sufficient for understanding the examples. More detailed information on Bliss is available elsewhere[B71,WRH71].

INTERPRETATION OF NAMES

A Bliss program operates with and on a number of storage "segments". A segment consists of a fixed and finite number of "words". A word may be "named"; the value of a name is called a "pointer" to the word. Identifiers are bound to names by declarations. Thus the value of an instance of an identifier, say x , is not the value of the word named by x , but rather a pointer to x . This interpretation requires a "contents of" operator for which the symbol "." has been chosen.

This context independent interpretation of identifiers as pointers is maintained consistently throughout the language. It is the operators of

Bliss which place an interpretation on the value of an expression. So, for example, the assignment operator " \leftarrow " interprets its right hand operand as a value which is to be stored in the word pointed to by the value of the left hand operand. As a result the effect of the Algol assignment statement " $A:=B+C$ " is identical to the Bliss assignment " $A\leftarrow B+C$ ". This interpretation of names also allows the computation of pointers in Bliss so that the effect of the assignment " $(A+3)\leftarrow(A+5)$ " is to store the value of the fifth location past A into the third location past A.

CONTROL STRUCTURES

Bliss is a block-structured, go-to-less, "expression language". That is, every executable construct, including those which manifest control, is an expression and computes a value. Expressions may be concatenated with semicolons to form expression sequences. An expression sequence is evaluated in strictly left-to-right order and its value is that of its last (rightmost) component expression. A pair of symbols, begin and end, or left and right parentheses, may be used to embrace such an expression sequence to form a simple expression. A block is a special case of the construction which contains declarations.

Other than expressions and functions, control mechanisms in Bliss fall into four classes: conditional, selection, looping, and leave. The conditional expression

Finally, functions are defined and called in Bliss in a manner similar to that in Algol, except that there are no specifications and all parameters are implicitly call-by-value. The value of a function is the value of the expression forming its body.

CHAPTER II

OPTIMIZATION PRIMITIVES

This chapter develops a set of primitive relations, functions, and operators to be used in defining a class of feasible object code optimizations. There are several goals that direct this development.

First, the primitives are to form a basis for a set of concise descriptions of various optimizations. The compact notation of the system of primitives provides a basis for succinct descriptions of optimization strategies which in the past have often been described by lengthy algorithms.

Second, the primitives make possible a uniform representation of a large class of optimizations. The pyramid effect resulting from a buildup of primitives defined in terms of combinations of more basic primitives creates this uniformity. In addition this buildup produces a common basis for describing a wide range of optimizations.

Finally, the collection of primitives must allow an implementation of optimizations which is as concise as their descriptions. This final goal directs the selection among a number of different sets of primitives satisfying the preceding two criteria.

PRIMITIVE ORDERING RELATIONS

The problem of object code optimization can be viewed as the search for a transformation T which when applied to a program P produces an program P' that is more efficient. In general the optimization of a program effects a trade-off among a number of measures of program "efficiency". The most important include: size of the object code, execution time, and the amount of storage for data including user requested space and compiler generated temporary storage. The primitives presented in this thesis will concentrate on exposing the set of feasible optimizations in a program. Even though a particular aspect of a program could be optimized (i.e. feasible), it may not be desirable because it only moderately decreases one of the above measures while increasing the cost of another. It should also be pointed out that the notion of efficiency for an algorithm P cannot always be divorced from the data on which P executes. The optimization strategies to be considered and the primitives to be developed are in the class of data independent optimizations that are realizable at compile time. Data sensitive optimizations in general require the collection of run-time statistics which can be used subsequently in re-compilation of the program. As the various optimization strategies are described their effect on the measures listed above will be noted.

We approach the problem of describing feasible optimizations for a program P by considering the ordering relations inherent in a

representation of P. There are several: the lexical order of the input text, the precedence-induced order of evaluation, both data-sensitive and data-insensitive order induced by control flow, a leftmost, depth-first tree order, and so forth. Two such orderings are of interest to the development.

The first is the order relation that results from considering a program as a mapping from its set of input variables to its set of output variables. Stated another way, this ordering, called the essential ordering and symbolized by " \prec ", is the ordering on evaluation of expressions that results from the application of the data flow and control flow semantics of a language L to the set of expressions E in a program P. The optimizations to be considered will regard the essential order in a program as immutable.

The second ordering to be defined allows the selection of subsets of the total set of expressions in a program which at a given point are of interest to an optimization strategy. The following set of examples helps motivate the particular definition given for Bliss.

A representation of a program defines (at least partially) an evaluation order on its set of expressions. For example, the compound expression

begin e_1 ; e_2 ; ... ; e_n end

defines an ordering implying that evaluation of e_1 precedes evaluation of

